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A SERMON

PREACH'D before the

UNIVERSITY

OF

CAMBRIDGE,

Octob. 31st. 1714.

One of the Days appointed Yearly

FOR

COMMEMORATION

OF

BENEFACTORS.

By *JOHN WALLER*, B.D. and Fellow of *Corpus Christi College* in CAMBRIDGE.

CAMBRIDGE:

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A

SERMON

Preached before the

UNIVERSITY

OF

CAMBRIDGE,

On July 17th.

Commencement Day

BRITISH MUSEUM

COMMEMORATION

OF

BENEFACTORS.

Luke XII. 48.

For unto whomsoever much is given; of him shall be much required; and to whom Men have committed much, of him they will ask the more.

The occcasion of these Words is a parabolical Speech, in which our Divine Redeemer most excellently states the several different degrees in which our Actions are imputable to us; and the as different Sentences which we may thereupon expect both from Human and Divine Justice. By the Measures in which He makes the Master of the House deal his Rewards and Punishments to his Servants, He sets before us the Judgment and Practise of Mankind; tells us what we our Selves would think our Selves obliged to do, were we in the capacity of Judges; and by consequence

quence ſhews us that if we offend againſt thoſe Laws of Juſtice, which we and all Men muſt own and acknowledge; and be thereupon condemned; our Caſe is unpitiable and we unexcuſable. As we cannot but think it unjuſt and tyrannical for a Maſter to impoſe impoſſibilities on his Servant; or puniſh him for omitting what he neither did nor could have known himſelf obliged to do: ſo Sins of Ignorance, where we could not have avoided that ignorance, or informed our Selves better; Theſe we aſſure our Selves the Divine Juſtice and Goodneſs will forgive. But on the contrary, where we neglect the ſufficient means that we have of informing our Selves of our Lord's will; or know it and do it not, and make our Knowledge ſerve only to ſhew us how we may moſt oppoſe it: This, all the Juſtice in the World muſt condemn in the ſevereſt manner; a Perſon in theſe perverſe circumſtances, we, if Judges, would our Selves condemn to be beaten with many ſtripes, as worthy of the greateſt puniſhment. To whom much is given, of him much muſt and will be required. He who has a larger Sphere to move in; who has a greater means of Knowledge; more conſtant Motives and fairer Opportunities of doing good than others; 'Tis moſt juſtly expected that his Improvements and Actions

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be as much above the ordinary rate, as these his great Advantages are: and if he approves himself accordingly, his Honour and Reward, both from God and Man, will be assigned in proportion to his good use of so much committed to him. And indeed 'tis God's Mercy, as well as Justice to us all, that there is on the other hand this terrible consideration, to keep us to our duty, that as the good Use is the greatest Glory, Perfection and Happiness; so the Neglect or Abuse of the greatest Advantages must unavoidably end in the very greatest of Punishments; the very greatest Shame, Confusion and Misery of which we are capable.

There needs no further explanation, especially in this place, of these words of our Lord, which I have chose for the Subject of my present discourse. We are now met upon an occasion highly suitable to apply them to our Selves. We are going to praise and glorify God for a long line of Illustrious KINGS and QUEENS, and others deceas'd, who have put many Talents into our hands; and for his most Excellent MAJESTY now reigning, who has assured us of His particular Protection in the Possession of them. And therefore it cannot but be particularly seasonable at this Time, seriously to reflect

reflect upon these many Talents; what they are; how great Service we may, and therefore are by God and Man required to do with them; to Our God, Our King, Our Church and State; and how great happiness we may by so doing procure to our selves.

First Then, I shall consider all Mankind as having something either little or much, committed to them.

Secondly, The great advantages, which our Academical Education puts into our Hands.

And, *Thirdly*, I shall reflect very briefly, upon the great uses that ought to be made of it.

First, I shall consider all Mankind, as having something, either little or much; either one, few, or many Talents, committed to them.

Our Blessed Lord, in the Excellent Parable which gave occasion to the words of my Text, by the Master no doubt means God Almighty, and by the Servants all Mankind. He tells us of some Servants that had more, some less, but none that had

nothing

nothing committed to them; none that had nothing to answer for, or could be worthy of no Stripes. The Parables of the Talents and Pounds, as recorded by St. *Matthew* and St. *Luke*, is entirely to the same effect. And in the nature of the thing, to suppose any Person to have no Opportunities, no Powers of being or doing good, would be to destroy his Human Nature, to take away his Reason and Liberty, and make him capable of neither Duty nor Sin at all. Absolute Ideots indeed, and Persons that have wholly lost the use of their Reason, are, so far as appears to us, Instances of this kind. But abating these deplorable Circumstances, God has bestowed upon us all some of his Gifts, in how different Degrees and Quantities soever. The nicest Observation can scarce shew any Person so unhappy as not to have some Blessings; And as there is no compleat Happiness; so neither can it be said, there is any compleat Misery in this World. But those that are unhappy in some Respects, are generally made amends with Advantages in others. For instance, if a Person of a low Fortune and mean Education, has yet a healthful Body and a good Name; is able by honest Labour to support himself and those that depend upon him; and is useful to Mankind in

the meaner, but ſtill neceſſary offices of Human Life: Or on the other hand, if an infirm Body be recompenc'd by a wiſe and underſtanding Mind; a plentiful Eſtate; or, for want of that by the kindneſs and aſſiſtance of Friends. Whatever reſpects we conſider Mankind in, we ſhall ſcarce find any one under ſo many diſadvantages, as to have no allay of good mixt with them. And were all things elſe to fail, ſtill his Reaſon and Underſtanding and Will, by which he is capable both of knowing and doing his duty to God and Man, and fitting himſelf for immortal happineſs; ſtill this is one Talent, and the greateſt of all that he can have committed to him. Let not then the meaneſt, pooreſt, and moſt ignorant of Mankind, and much leſs any above theſe, think themſelves leſs concerned in the Kingdom of Heaven, or leſs liable to their Lord's Judgment, than the greateſt, beſt or wiſeſt. For though we ſhall all of us be judg'd according to the ſeveral meaſures that we have; yet thoſe that have leaſt committed to them are as accountable for their little, as thoſe that have moſt for their larger ſhare. Thoſe that have the feweſt poſſible advantages, in point of Knowledge, Fortune, Education, or in any other reſpect; yet are ſtill capable of ſerving

God

God acceptably, if they do their beſt; and of carrying themſelves with Honeſty and Humility amongſt Mankind. If therefore they uſe their beſt endeavour in theſe things, they will gain the title of good and faithful; and if they neglect this their one Talent, they muſt expect to be condemned as wicked and ſlothful Servants.

But we, and others that are brought up in this Learned Body, are thoſe to whom much is committed; and therefore, I come now in the Second place, briefly to reflect upon thoſe great Advantages, which this our Education puts into our Hands.

Theſe muſt conſiſt either Firſt, in the improvement of our Knowledge; or Secondly, our advancement in Piety and good Manners. And Firſt, the great Opportunities of improving our Knowledge which we here enjoy, are certain from Experience to all that will make uſe of them; and can be denied by none here educated, but thoſe that have neglected them, and then will not give themſelves leave to conſider what 'tis they might have gain'd here, for fear of being, perhaps too late, convinc'd how great Enemies they have been to themſelves, by their own

negligence. 'Tis required, as a neceſſary Condition of our firſt Admiſſion into this our Body, that we ſhou'd underſtand thoſe Languages, in which the greateſt and moſt uſeful parts of Knowledge have been in all Ages publiſh'd to the World. We have all the Knowledge, which the wiſeſt Men of all Ages could attain, tranſmitted to Poſterity in their Immortal Writings, and preſerv'd amongſt us, as amongſt other Societies of the ſame Nature with our Selves, in a greater ſhare than moſt parts of the World beſides. We have Leiſure and Liberty, and Freedom from the Cares and Buſineſs of Life, on purpoſe that we may wholly devote our Selves to uſeful Studies, and the improvement of our Minds. There is no ſort of Learning either Human or Divine, but what all our Members have conſtant Opportunities of being in private inſtructed in. The Excellent Diſputations both in our Colleges and Schools, are the glory of Truth, and beſt publick means of Information, in the principal parts of all Learning. I muſt beg leave particularly to obſerve our great happineſs in theſe performances. They are continual inſtances, that in order to gain a Character here, Perſons muſt be Maſters of thoſe Parts of Knowledge, which their ſeveral Stations oblige them to purſue: They ſhew the Hearers

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what can be ſaid for Error; and how Truth overcomes it, both in Human and Divine Things. This is the greateſt poſſible means to baniſh Bigotry, Prejudice and prepoſſeſſion: to eſtabliſh real and Subſtantial Knowledge upon a Solid Foundation: to guard and defend us for our whole lives, and make us able to guard others againſt Error and Infidelity; ſince we have been here made acquainted with all their darts; ſeen them uſed to the beſt advantage; and at the ſame time have been ſhewn their weakneſs, and the manner of repelling them. Our hopeful Youth cannot be too much commended in this reſpect: Excellent Performances of all kinds may fairly be expected from riper years and a longer ſtudy: But the Acuteneſs and Sagacity, the Knowledge and Judgment, ſo often ſhewn by young Perſons in our Philoſophical Schools, is at once the admiration of Strangers, a Shining Inſtance of the great Improvement made by our Methods of Education, in a little time, and a moſt excellent means of improving the very youngeſt Hearers, and ſpurring them on to Induſtry and Imitation.

And, in this reſpect, we have this further charge to anſwer both to God and Man, that as our Opportunities

portunities of knowing are great; ſo the Motives and Obligations that we are here under, to uſe and improve theſe Opportunities, are no leſs. Examples to excite us, Inſtructors to aſſiſt, exhort and admoniſh us; Statutes to oblige us, our own Engagement to obey theſe Statutes, and the excellent Care of our Governors to execute them. Next to Conſcience of our duty to God, who gave us our Faculties, and all our Capacities of promoting both his Glory and our own Perfection; 'Tis, at firſt ſight, impoſſible, we ſhould be under greater Motives or ſtronger Obligations.

And as our duty to God is not only the ſtrongeſt of all Obligations, but the ground and fountain of all other Obligations whatſoever; So Our Royal and Illuſtrious FOUNDERS have thought fit, that we ſhould all in particularly bind our Selves to God by Oaths, to make the beſt uſe of thoſe Opportunities which by their Munificence we here enjoy, for the Improvement of our Selves, both in Knowledge and Goodneſs. I apprehend it to be neither unſeaſonable, nor unſuitable with the preſent Subject, to reflect a little in this Place upon our Matriculation Oath, as including all Obligations that our ſeveral Degree

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and Stations lay upon us; which we are obliged to take the first opportunity after our Admission, without which we are capable of no Degree, nor are reckoned as Members of the University.

I shall briefly consider both its reasonableness to be enjoined us, and what its conscientious Observation requires. The first Article of this our Oath is, That we shall obey the CHANCELLOR, and VICE-CHANCELLOR of this University, as far as 'tis just and lawful, as long as we continue in it. And since 'tis necessary to the Preservation of every Society that the Members obey the Governors of it; since for this end 'tis the Universal practise of the World, not only for PRINCES to enjoin Oaths of Allegiance upon their Subjects; but for all lesser Corporations and Societies to Swear their Members to obey their several Governors; 'tis plain that the very same Obligation, laid upon us, at our Admittance into this Our Body, cannot without any shew of Reason be complained of. The next Article is no less reasonable, that we shall, as far as in us lies, observe the Laws, Statutes, approved Customs and Priviledges of this University. For, unless it were allowable for its own Members to destroy its Constitution, it must be

be in the higheſt Degree juſt, that they ſhould be under the greateſt Obligation, to obſerve thoſe Laws that are made for the Preſervation and good Order of it. That we ſhould obſerve its Privileges granted by our PRINCES of Illuſtrious Memory; and by repeated Acts of our Whole Legiſlature: That we ſhould never violate them to the beſt of our Knowledge; nor ſuffer them to be violated where we can prevent it: What is all this but a due Obedience to the Laws of our Nation? A Duty to our PRINCE, and a piece of natural Gratitude that we ought to pay to that Society in which we are changed from Children to Men; From whence we derive the Nouriſhment and Growth and Perfection of our Minds; where the Foundation is laid of moſt, if not all the Knowledge that ever we attain to; and of all the Uſe that we are of in the World for our whole Lives. Upon this account the reſt of our Oath is entirely reaſonable, that we ſhould for our whole Lives, not only promote the Progreſs of Piety and good Learning; the great Deſign which gave being to Our Mother the Univerſity, and made us Her Children: But that we ſhould always by our Vote and Advice, of our own Inclination, whether ſollicited by others or not, defend its good Eſtate, Honour,

and

and Dignity. For is not this a due regard that we owe to the Memory of thoſe Great and Good Perſons that founded us, and to the Laws of the Realm that confirm'd our Conſtitution, for the perpetual encreaſe of Religion and Learning? Is not this our laſting reſpect a very juſt return on our parts, for the as laſting advantages that are here offered us, and which we muſt receive, if by our own wilful Folly and Vanity we do not neglect, nay refuſe them? Laſtly, is it not a duty that we owe to Poſterity its ſelf, to contribute our Endeavors in our ſeveral Stations whether high or low, that this Fountain of Knowledge may be tranſmitted to it entire and unviolated? If all theſe Queſtions cannot reaſonably be anſwered, but in the Affirmative; then this ſolemn Obligation that we take upon our Selves in our Youth, muſt be entirely juſt and equitable; Fit for our Royal Founders and Governors to enjoin us; and therefore demands, what I come next briefly to conſider, our Conſcientious Performance and Diſcharge of it.

'Tis a very plain Error, and what all Perſons ought to be undeceived in, to ſuppoſe that all of us, by being under this Obligation, are obliged to know all the Statutes, Cuſtoms and Privileges of

the Univerſity, in order to a conſcientious Diſcharge of it; as it would be to ſuppoſe all Perſons obliged to know all the Laws of our Land, in order to pay a conſcientious Allegiance to His moſt Excellent MAJESTY, whom God preſerve. Let us hear the Learned *Sanderſon*'s Determination upon this very Subject. * *Cum Statuta Communitatum fere plurima ſint & multa multis ignota, & difficillimum ſit, imo vix poſſibile omnia & ſingula exacte & examuſſim obſervare: Qui bona fide ita ſe comparaverit ut nihil quod eſt officii ſui lubens præterierit, debitamque adhibuerit moralem diligentiam; ut ea omnia ſciret quæ ad ipſius officium pertinent; Statueritque Statui, honori, paci ſuæ communitatis, quantum humana patitur infirmitas, fideliter & ſine Scandalo inſervire, hunc ego non dubitarim fidem de Statutis obſervandis a ſe datam, bona conſcientia hactenus liberaſſe, & debitum ad quod ſe obligavit æqui boni lege exolviſſe. Quod item & de publicis Regni legibus intelligendum eſt.* And thus it muſt be with reſpect to all Laws whatſoever; when we have endeavoured to know and perform them ſo far as our ſeveral Stations, Capacities, and Opportunities will admit, we muſt be allowed both in the Sight of God and Man, conſcientiouſly to have diſcharged all Obligations that

* De Juramenti Obligatione Prælect. 3tia.

we have laid our ſelves under in this reſpect.

But as we may truly ſay, all reaſonable and due care is taken, that all Perſons amongſt us ſhould know what their ſeveral Orders and Stations oblige them to; ſo 'tis plain that the principal part of this our ſolemn Obligation is what none can be ignorant of. To live here in a neglect of the Divine Worſhip and Service, conſtantly performed amongſt us; in a neglect of the daily offers and opportunities of Improvement in uſeful Knowledge and Learning; in an idle, vain, unprofitable, and perhaps ſinful Manner, both with regard to our Selves and others; We muſt know that this is to break our Oath; as it would otherwiſe have been, to break our Duty in the plaineſt and groſſeſt ſenſe that's poſſible. And on the other hand, that Piety to God, Obedience to our Superiors, and Diligence in Study, though otherwiſe our duty, are yet made doubly ſo, by our being ſworn and devoted to them. Any Perſon really unprejudic'd, that has opportunities of knowing, muſt own that our Body never was happier than at preſent, in the regard generally paid to theſe great Obligations, by the Numerous Youth under its care; although Human Frailty always did, and always will in this

life, leave room for Exhortation to abound and improve in good Works, in Diligence and Study, in Learning and Piety.

And this brings me to a very brief Reflection upon the laſt and greateſt of all the Talents committed to us; the particular Tendency of our happy Education, to promote Vertue and Piety in us for our whole lives. Here let undeniable Fact ſpeak for its ſelf. To be kept to the practiſe of Virtue and Piety, in the weak and injudicious time of Youth; when we are moſt apt to run into fatal Habits of Vice and Vanity; this all Perſons will allow, is next to the Grace of God, the moſt effectual means to have a happy influence on our whole lives. And this all good Perſons, of all Ranks and Degrees whatſoever, muſt and ought to wiſh and endeavour for their Poſterity. But is it the care; and is the very Nature and Conſtitution of our Univerſities fitted to promote this Excellent End? Are all our Youth Members of a Family whoſe Governors have, and do exerciſe, an Authority over them; do obſerve their Manners and inſpect their Actions; do cenſure Vice, and encourage Virtue and Piety in them? Have we not the moſt delectable ſight of our

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College Chappels at constant hours, daily fill'd with Persons remembring and worshipping their Creator in the days of their youth, and, at our appointed times, solemnly Commemorating our Saviour's infinite Love to Mankind, at the most Holy Sacrament of his Body and Blood? As 'tis undeniable that we have all these great advantages; so 'tis as clear as the light, that they are the greatest Human Means that can be used, to make both our Youth and the rest of our Lives habitually Good, Virtuous and Religious.

Let it not be objected that notwithstanding all this; many go from hence into the World both Ignorant and Vicious; and lead the rest of their Lives as if they neither had a Learned nor Virtuous Education. These are indeed unhappy Instances of the utmost perverseness of Human Nature: They are so remarkably Odious, that a few of them are taken notice of, and appear as many. But were they, as 'tis certain they are not, frequent as those that wish us ill would have them; this would only prove that Multitudes are bad, in spite of both Human and Divine means to make them good. Thus the greater part of the World are wicked, in spite of Reason and Grace too; and some would

would be Infidels, though One ſhould riſe from the Dead to convince them. But the real Merits of theſe Caſes, admit of a very eaſy Deciſion. That we ought to pray for the Grace of God, though harden'd Sinners reject and reſiſt it to their own damnation. That we ought thankfully to embrace, as the Gifts of God, the Opportunities of improving in Knowledge and Piety; though ſome that have them, fooliſhly neglect or abuſe theſe Opportunities. Let us pay all poſſible and due regard to Proteſtant Univerſities abroad: But 'tis plain to the World, We have a Talent committed to us, which the Chief of them are ſo unhappy as to want; the Guard over our Youth in Colleges, and the obliging them to be conſtant at the Worſhip of God. We indeed can never be too careful to preſerve in the greateſt Purity and Perfection, ſo great a Charge committed to us. Our Nobility and Gentry, 'tis to be hoped, will be Unanimous in thinking it, the cauſe of their God, their King, their Country, and their Poſterity, to promote and encourage it; and our beſt wiſhes attend our Brethren abroad, that in God's appointed time, they may have ſuch Illuſtrious Benefactors as we have had, to put ſuch a poſſeſſion into their hands.

But to draw to a Concluſion. What is the great Ballance required, in anſwer to ſo much committed to us? This is a Queſtion almoſt as eaſily anſwered, as ask'd in Words: Glorious in the higheſt Degree for us to anſwer in our Actions: Terrible to fall ſhort of anſwering in ſo high a Degree, as 'tis to be feared too many do. For all Perſons that go from hence to be for their whole Lives in the Stations of Nobility, Clergy or Gentry; whether conſidered as Single or as Heads of Families; to continue the practice of thoſe Pious and Virtuous Rules, that they have been accuſtomed to here; to remember that the Univerſity obliges them for their whole Lives to promote Piety to God, Loyalty to the KING, and a due Reverence to the Church and State; conſtantly to endeavour to make all Perſons, that they have any influence over, or intereſt in, good Men, good Subjects, good Chriſtians, and good Neighbours; for us all, in our ſeveral Capacities to be improving in our Selves, and communicating to Others for the good of Mankind, the uſeful Knowledge that we have received here; all this we know is the great, the juſt, the happy Demand, that both God and Man has upon us. If we be ſo juſt and happy, as to anſwer it; the Ungodly will

will ſee it and be grieved; the Good will ſee it and rejoyce. Both our Church and State will rejoice in us, and we ſhall be continually ſending out Members that will be Bleſſings to both. *God Himſelf ſhall bleſs us*; He ſhall accept us as good and faithful Servants; and by our Means next to his Grace, *All the People ſhall fear Him.* I muſt Conclude therefore, with that Divine word of Exhortation (How happy ſhould we be were it always upon our Minds) *Let your light ſo ſhine before Men, that they may ſee your good works, and glorify your Father, which is in Heaven.*

FINIS.